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DOMINIC and HIS FLOATING STORE

from the book "Madeline Solomon - Koyukuk"
produced by the Yukon-Koyukuk School District, 1981

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Hancock House Publishers, Blaine, WA



I worked for Dominic Vernetti for about twenty years. He was the storekeeper in Koyukuk. People knew him all over. He was a good natured guy. He used to help everybody. Outfit them. Sometimes for thousand dollars or fifteen hundred dollars. Even persons that he never met before. Even White people. He used to just outfit them. They used to come up the Koyukuk River and stay out the whole winter; when they go back down, they pay him up.

All the people from Huslia used to go down the Yukon River and fish down the Yukon and come back in falltime. They used to have scow boats with inboard motor. They used to fill those scows with their groceries what they get from Dominic. What he outfit them with. He felt sorry for everybody. He didn't want nobody to go hungry.

He had a good memory but he didn't have much schooling. He didn't know how to read English, only in his Italian. And he never did write. His wife, Ella, used to keep books for him. She was one of my best friends. We were just like sisters, actually first cousins. She was educated Outside. She had more education than I had. When I stayed with her once in a while she used to kind of teach me. That way I picked up a little. I used to go down with her husband. Whole bunch of used to go with him and that way I had a lot of friends at Anvik and all the other villages.

Dominic sold things for fish out of his floating store. He had his big scow just full of fish when he got back to Koyukuk. Then he send it all over to Fairbanks and everywhere. He had orders from all over for dog feed. He sold everything by the next spring. Dry fish for dogs. He bought salt strips, too. They were cheap then about a dollar a pound. Right now its seven or eight dollars a pound.

There were a lot of stories about how Dominic used to take advantage of people. He kind of had his crooked side, too. But everybody knew that and people used to get even with him. Fun, almost like a game. When he bought fish, his scale used to weigh a little light, maybe a pound or so. When people came into the store part of the boat, I used to add on a little to take care of it. Make it even. Or one time to pay him back some people put rocks in their fish. That way they weigh more. Dominic didn't know anything about it. He just bought the bundle, rocks and all. Then he sell it to some persons, they open the fish and they see rocks in there. After that he's sure that there's no rocks in there when he starts to buy fish.

One time Johnny Dick, he's still living in Grayling sold fish to Dominic. I think he had some more bundles of fish out there in the smokehouse. After they got all divided up, they said, "Let's go in the house to have coffee," or something. They all went in but Dominic. Next they look through the window they see Dominic packing fish down to the boat. Johnny Dick just ran down to him and grabbed that fish back from him and brought it to his smokehouse. He said, "Oh, I thought this was mine. I thought the boys forgot to bring it down." Everybody laughed.

Lot of people used to work for Dominic. He used to hire five or six men. Leo Demoski was one. I used to run the store and cook the same time. I made five dollars a day on those two jobs. So cheap, but work was cheap in those days. Couldn't get no higher wage. I don't know about construction maybe was high, but work was cheap everywhere.

EDITORIAL

Spring has sprung in Fairbanks. The geese have returned to Creamer's Field, weeks earlier than in recent years. Now, if we could just get our final snow storm out of the way (we know it is going to happen!).

I am quite pleased with this issue. While it is comprised of mostly "reprints", I think that they were not generally known to our subscribers.

Hancock House has graciously granted permission once again for us to reprint a few pages from their book "Madeline Solomon - Koyukuk." In these short passages, we get a first hand account of trade on the Yukon, and a glimpse into the personality of Dominic Vernetti, one of the better known traders in interior Alaska.

The story of Clara Rotman's funeral shows the blending of two cultures, rather than the usual clash. Thanks to Ron Benice for this. And Kurtis Hawk found an interesting article about a proposed commemorative Half Dollar for Alaska. Ah, what might have been!

We continue with "Token Snapshots," this month with a nice shot of Polet's Store in Nome. These are literally some of the most colorful tokens issued in Alaska.

Just a reminder that we still have copies of our book *Alaska & Yukon Stocks and Bonds* for \$35 post-paid via bookrate, or add \$6 for priority mail. We only had 1,000 printed. Get yours now before they are gone! The joke around the store is that I need to sell one a day for three years. Here is your chance to help Dick meet his quota. Order yours today!

Editor - Dick Hanscom

Associate Editor - Jerry Cleworth

Anchorage Correspondent - vacant

Canadian Correspondent - Jerry Remick

Yukon Correspondent - Jim Robb

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United States -	\$15 per year
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1 page - \$15 1/2 page - \$8 1/4 page - \$5

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Classified ads: 20 cents per line.

Commercial advertisers: write for rates

PRICES REALIZED

Selected prices realized from eBay:

Russian America Co., 10 Kopek note	3100.00
Anchorage, Flowers, B-18a	OB150NB
Anchorage, Flowers, B-18a	OB99NB
Anchorage, Kustatan, B-26a	30.00
Cordova, Windsor Hotel, B-41c	OB90.00
Fairbanks, Masonic, B-33b	OB250.0NB
Goodnews Bay, Jean, B-1c	76.00
Juneau, Franklin Hotel, B-22a	987.00
Juneau, Imperial Cigar Store, B-29a	OB20.00
Ketchikan, Pioneer Pool Room, B-47a	OB45.00
Ketchikan, Hotel Connell encased cent	357.00
McCarthy, Golden Hotel, B-2b	51.75
Nenana, Ghezzi, B-3a	46.98
Nenana, Ghezzi, B-3a	28.77
Quinhagak, Pauline Jean, B-1b	53.00
Seward, Northern, B-8b	35.00
Valdez, Blackwell/Rowdy, B-2a	258.99
Valdez, Copper Block Buffet, B-4a	24.03
Valdez, Buffet, B-4b	40.00
AYPE Encased Cent, round	81.00
AYPE Encased Cent, round	22.71
DEW Line Medal, 1956	22.26
Whitehorse, T,D,&P, 25¢	9.00
Whitehorse, T,D,&P, 50¢	15.00
Whitehorse, T,D,&P, \$1	15.00
Whitehorse, T,D,&P, \$10	37.97
Greenland Kryolith Mine, 10 Ore	49.07
Greenland Kryolith Mine, 50 Ore	51.01
Spitzbergen, 1946 3 Rubles	OB350.00NB
Spitzbergen, 1946 5 Rubles	OB300.00NB
OB = Opening Bid	
NB = No Bid	

COAL DOLLAR

A friend looked up at our wall in the store at a photo project I did over 20 years ago, and commented on the Coal Dollar.

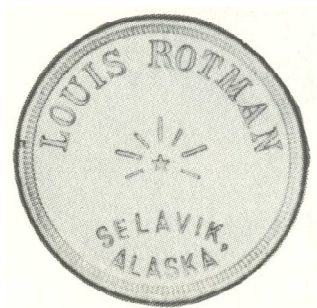
He said that they were passed out in Kenai about 1964/1965. Interesting, if his memories are not playing tricks on him, as we always thought they were earlier than that. And why Kenai???

And 1964/1965 is very late. Silver was going out of circulation at the time. Will have to ask him about this the next time I see him.

THE ROTMANS OF PRICE REALIZED

SELVIK & KOTZEBUE

Prices realized from our auction of April 12.



One never knows where you will find trivia relating to token issuers. Ron Benice sent us an article from "Reformed Judaism," the Fall 2002 issue. While we can't use the complete article, we thought that you might find a few excerpts interesting.

The article, "The Ice Rebbe Cometh" by Mark S. Glickman pertains to the passing of Clara Rotman Salinas in November of 2001. While the trials and tribulations of a Tacoma Rabbi getting to Kotzebue and conducting a Jewish funeral in an Eskimo village are amusing (the writer's style has a lot to do with that), I would like to just stick with the biographical facts about Clara Rotman Salinas.

Clara Rotman Salinas was born in 1914 in Kiana Clara Levy. Her mother, a native Alaskan, had died young, and her father, William Shakespeare Levy raised his four daughters as proud Jews. Clara married Louis Rotman. After Louis died, she married Steve Salinas, a non-Jew.

"Clara operated two general stores in Kotzebue and Selvik, both of which continue today....

"Culturally, Clara was an Alaskan pipeline, connecting the Jews and Eskimos. In Kotzebue, she shared with her neighbors the richness of being Jewish. Visiting relatives in the Lower 48, she shared her Inupiaq wisdom - the importance of hospitality, the richness of subsistence living, the value of strong, quiet perseverance.

She was "survived by four children, twenty-nine grandchildren, forty great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild."

The whole article makes for interesting reading. If you would like a photocopy of this article, send us a self addressed, stamped envelope and we will see that you get it.

Lot	Bid
221 Anchorage, B-7a,b	20
222 Chatanika, B-1b	40
223 Cordova, B-14a	40
224 Elmendorf AFB, B-1, a,b,c,f	20
225 Gambell, B-1 a-e	40
226 Hoonah, B-1 a-e	50
227 Ketchikan, B-44 b,d,e	12
228 Noorvik, B-1 b-e	12
229 Savoonga, B-1 a-e	40
230 Assortment of AK tokens	45
231 Carl Parker gold medal	345
232 Placer Miners silver medals	22
233 U of A silver medals	28
234 Iditarod silver medals	150
235 Official State medals, 1990, 1994	50
236 Official State medals 1992	150mb*
237 AK Highway Medal	26
238 35th Anniversary of Statehood medal	18
239 Official State Medals 1994	26
240 Fairbanks Dog Races booklet	38
241 AK Homesteaders Handbook plus...	160
242 Alaska magazines	10
243 Misc. Alaska magazines	10

mb = sold to mail bidder; * indicates reduced bid.

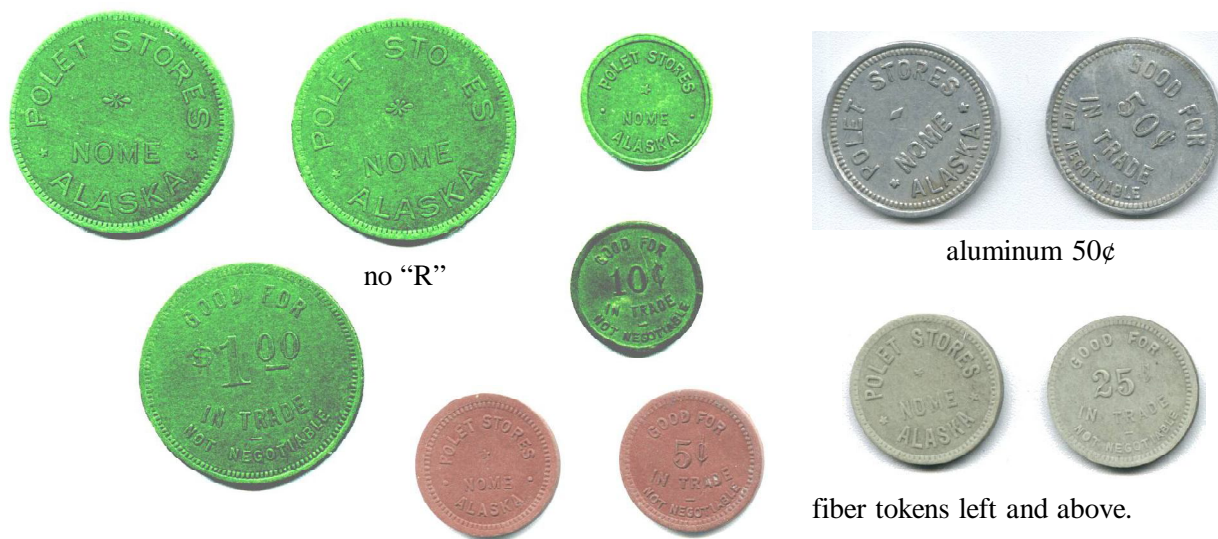
Mail bidder participation for this auction was way down, as was participation from the floor. We think this can be attributed to the fact that the quality of the consignments were not up to our usual standard. The tokens offered in this auction were all relatively common, and thus did not attract the level of bids required to make it interesting.

2002 STATE MEDAL MINTAGES

Silver		Gold	
2 oz.	146	3 oz.	11
1 oz. Proof	5,677	1 oz.	130
1 oz. Matte	401	½ oz.	68
½ oz.	843	1/10 oz.	119
¼ oz.	941	1/20 oz.	122
1/10 oz.	985		
1/20 oz.	839		

The big surprise in the mintage figures above is the low quantity of the matte finish one ounce medals minted.

TOKEN SNAPSHOTS



no "R"

aluminum 50¢

fiber tokens left and above.

Antonio Polet was a fixture in Nome from 1901 until 1946. We have shown ads and run short articles on him in the past. The postcard above shows him in the middle (we think!) and his grocery store front. During World War II, aluminum and copper were required for the war effort. These are some of the very few fiber tokens issued in Alaska. A variety of the \$1 has the "R" missing in "Stores." The aluminum tokens are much scarcer.

We can offer the following tokens from Polet Stores:

Four piece fiber set, 5¢ (red), 10¢ (green), 25¢ (white/gray) and \$1 in trade (green), B-41b,d,f,i **\$45.00**

\$1 in trade, B-41i, with a filled die, "R" in Stores missing **\$25.00**

25¢ in trade, B-41f in three qualities: clean **\$15.00**; slightly dirty **\$12.00**; and dirty **\$10.00**

5¢ in trade, B-41b **\$8.00**

50¢ in trade, B-41g, aluminum **\$40.00**

FOR THE RECORD



(ANCHORAGE): Rabbit Hutch, good for one drink, St. Pat's Day only. Black on wood.



ANCHORAGE: George's Homestead Lounge, good for one drink. Black on white plastic, 42mm (submitted by Ken Rieck).



ANCHORAGE: Westerner Bar, good for one drink. White on red plastic, 37mm, thick (submitted by Ken Rieck).



HOMER: Griffin's Bayside Lounge, \$2.25 in trade. Black on blue plastic poker chip, 38mm (submitted by Ken Rieck).



SOLDOTNA: Soldotna Y Service, Robert L Veach. Face Value \$1.00. A possible Elbee's fabrication. See the next item.



(FAIRBANKS): The obverse (top) is from a wooden dollar your editor had made in 1979. It was not paired with the reverse, except by the manufacturer, Elbee's of San Antonio, TX. This is a "mint sport" or fabrication. Unfortunately, this manufacturer was know for these.

FOR THE RECORD, CONT.



JUNEAU: Franklin Hotel, 12½¢ in trade, 25mm. B-22a. Listed, not illustrated. Recent sale on eBay, price realized \$987.00.



JUNEAU: Alaskan Brewing Co., 1986-1996, 10 years of great beers. Looks like oxidized cupronickel, 39mm.



KETCHIKAN: Elongated cent.



MAVERICK: Arctic Club, Alaska Day, Nov. 2nd., 1912, Good this day only. Brass, 24mm. Interesting token. Anyone have any ideas??? (eBay) PR - \$51.51.



HAFNARFJORDUR, ICELAND: “Viking” restaurant Fjorukrain, circa 1995, bronze, 24mm. This token was good for a beer. Reported also struck in silver and gold.



SPITZBERGEN: Two more “non-circulating, non-legal tender” 10 (Rubles) tokens from Arktikugol, the Russian coal mining company on Spitzbergen. The token at the top notes the Chechen take over of a theater in Moscow in October of 2002. The token on the bottom notes the floods in southern Russia in June of 2002. Very nicely done, the tokens are a cupronickel alloy, 30mm in diameter, with a reported mintage of 2,001. The seller states that there will not be any more of these commemoratives in the future. One can only wonder if these, and the tokens for the World Trade Center and the submarine Kursk, were just struck to private order, or if they actually had Arktikugol’s permission to use the name.

ALASKA SILVER COIN



The “Alaska Silver Coin” is 1 oz. pure silver. I remember seeing these when I arrived in Fairbanks in 1974. Dick McIntyre of Frontier Sporting Goods had these made, and they were for sale for \$10 in his store on Second Ave. Nearly 30 years later, we offer these as follows: \$10 each; 10 for \$85. Postage is \$3 for the first medal, and an additional 25¢ per additional medal (10 medals would be \$3 plus \$2.25)

ALASKA COMMEMORATIVE HALF

Designed and written by Robert A. Johnson for "The Coin Press," December 12, 1959.



"In the interest of numismatics, Alaska, to which this idea of a commemorative half dollar is dedicated, became our 49th state on July 4, 1959 (ed. note: wasn't it actually January 3, 1959?).

"The entry of Alaska into the Union was announced by a proclamation issued in December, 1958, by President Eisenhower. On July 4, 1959, another star was added to the United States flag.

"The portrait on the obverse of this coin is of William Henry Seward. His most important service to the United States during his term as Secretary of State, from 1861 to 1869, was the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867 for \$7,200,000. Alaska became a territory of the United States in 1912 by Act of Congress.

"Seward was born at Florida, New York, May 16, 1801. Trained for the bar, he graduated from Union College in 1820. He displayed such strong political abilities that he went from the state senate to the governorship, then to the United States Senate. When the Whig political party was dissolved, he joined the new Republi-

can party. Defeated in 1860 by Lincoln as presidential candidate, he became Secretary of State, continuing in that office under President Andrew Johnson. During the period of the Civil War, he displayed marked ability, particularly in matters of diplomacy with Great Britain, and in invoking the Monroe Doctrine concerning French intervention in Mexico.

"On the obverse, composing the legend, are the words, "Alaska 49th State." Alaska is an area of over 586,400 square miles which is 1/5 as large as the other 48 states combined. It gets its name from the language of the Aleuts. Al-ay-ek-sa, which means great land or mainland. Although more than twice the size of Texas, its population is less than 1/3 that of Rhode Island. Since 1867, Alaska's forests, waters and mines have yielded products worth billions of dollars; yet its resources have scarcely been tapped.

"The device on the reverse of the coin, is the map of Alaska with the stars of the Big Dipper, and the North Star. The stars are from the flag of Alaska which is dark blue with eight gold stars showing the Big Dipper and the North Star.

"Below the device on the reverse, is the motto, "E Pluribus Unum"... "One composed of many," now 49.

"In the exergue on the reverse is found, "Purchased 1867 Territory 1912 State 1959." May or 49th State always be as the mottos on the obverse of the coins state.. Conceived in Liberty and Trusting in God."

(submitted by Kurtis Hawk)

BANK OF CANADA SPECIMEN 1898 "YUKON" OVERPRINT



This has got to be one of the neatest pieces of currency offered recently. The color on the front of the note is quite dramatic. It was offered on eBay by Mel and Jeremy Steinberg with an opening bid of \$4,750. No bids were received.